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Thursday, December 5 - Wednesday, December 11, 2013 Advertising/Newsdesk: 01235 511700 www.oxfordjournal.co.uk

Oxfordshire needs to be prepared for cold weather

COUNTY CHIEF'S WINTER CAUTION

• Ian Hudspeth and Mandy Rigault at the launch of the county council's 'Ready for Winter' campaign (Picture courtesy of Oxfordshire County Council)

PEOPLE are being urged to help each other out in the coming months, ensuring everybody is 'Ready for Winter'.

By **James Booker**
jamesb@taylornewspapers.co.uk

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) has launched the campaign encouraging residents to rally round and make sure themselves, family, friends and neighbours are well-equipped to combat any freezing weather.

County council leader Ian Hudspeth said: "Every year the focus tends to be around gritting the roads and, of course, we do a massive amount of this in Oxfordshire every year. Last year, our gritters drove the equivalent of three times around the world.

"For a period of 10 years or so, we didn't really have challenging winters, but in the last few years we have had some severe weather on occasion. I think it's taken people by surprise.

"But there's a great many services and ways in which everyone can pull together that don't get the attention they deserve.

"That is why I am asking everyone to think ahead about how they can get ready for winter and find out how they can help themselves and others over the next few months.

"We would like people to think more about their neighbours and whether there is anything they could do to support those who are perhaps a little older or less able. All it takes is a couple of minutes to make sure someone is OK.

"We are also keen to dispel some myths. For some reason a few years ago a rumour started nationally that you weren't allowed to clear snow or ice from your own paths, the pavement in front of your house or business or for your neighbours.

"That's nonsense and the sort of thing that makes life more difficult.

"This year, if snow and ice arrive I want to see people out with their shovels pitching in... I promise I will do my bit too.

"By doing a few simple things now you could make life so much easier if or when more challenging weather arrives."

Despite the call for people to help themselves, Cllr Hudspeth said council services would still be fully capable of helping out when needed. "Should there be an emergency, we will be there for everybody," he said.

He added he was "very confident" the authority had the

• *Continued on page 2*

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Lend your support to small businesses

SMALL Businesses are important to any local economy and in Oxford steps are being taken to ensure the right support for their growth is in place.

By **Jack Johnson**
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This Saturday people across the country are being encouraged to support small businesses, both on the day and beyond, but the city council wish to take this a step further.

Drop-in sessions for businesses in Oxford are being held at the Town Hall tomorrow, where they can meet organisations who may be able to develop their business further.

There will also be the introduction of a Culture Card for customers, which provides savings with businesses in the city centre.

It also gives shoppers reduced parking costs on two dates in December at the Westgate multi-storey car park.

In addition, a Meet the Buyer event will be held on January 28 where small business suppliers can meet organisations and buyers in the public sector.

Councillor Bob Price, leader of Oxford City Council, hopes the public will get behind the initiative.

He said: "We have plenty of small businesses operating in Oxford and we want to encourage these to flourish and get the recognition they deserve.

"For shoppers we have the Covered Market which relies on local, independent business as well as the many independent traders we have around the city.

"This gives Oxford a unique shopping experience and we hope that many will continue to support them.

"It is important that we are supporting local and small businesses as our High Streets could end up looking very similar and the unique aspect of Oxford could disappear."

Discounted parking at the Westgate multi-storey car park will be £2.50 from 2pm on December 5 and the same on December 12.

Customers who enter the car park before 2pm will have to pay the normal charges.

• *The Covered Market is key for Oxford's small businesses*

Hundreds of children get into Christmas spirit at town hall sing-along

OVER 500 Oxfordshire schoolchildren took part in a Christmas sing-along on Tuesday and Wednesday, performing festive favourites at Oxford Town Hall.

The charity concert was raising money for Christian Aid, and featured young singers from 20 local primary schools, cheered on by family and friends.

As well as all the traditional carols, there was also a massed choir finale with the children performing Maori Christmas song Te Harinui and The Christmas Bells.

Sarah Clay, Christian Aid regional co-ordinator in Oxford, said: "With all the hard work the children have put in, it was a fantastic festive concert, and of course it raised money for a very worthy cause.

"Since the first Big Christmas Sing, the event has raised over £7,000 for Christian Aid."

Oxfordshire County Council's cabinet member for children, education and families, Melinda Tilley, added: "This is the sixth year that the county's Music Service has worked in partnership with Christian Aid to promote this event.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for young children to take part in a big performance and I'm sure they will all sing their hearts out."

Help each other out this winter

• *From front page*

right levels of sand and grit to tackle icy roads throughout the winter months.

OCC also wants people to think ahead when it comes to travelling, and ensure they set out prepared for any eventuality. Mandy Rigault, from the Road Safety Education Team – a branch of the county's Fire and Rescue Service – has advised people to plan for additional journey time, drive according to conditions and make sure their car contains appropriate back-up items for any potential breakdown.

"We're hoping that we can keep Oxfordshire moving around safely and comfortably, without causing harm to themselves or other people," she said.

News Bites

Civil concerns

AMERICAN civil rights leader Rev Jesse Jackson spoke at the Oxford Union on Tuesday.

Rev Jackson raised concerns about admissions to Oxford and Cambridge University, criticising the number of poor or black students studying at the institutions.

The 72-year-old fought for civil rights in the USA, including the right to vote, alongside Martin Luther King.

Woman cut free

A WOMAN had to be cut free from her car after a crash in Cowley on Tuesday afternoon.

The female, who was a passenger, was involved in a collision between a Nissan Qashqai and a silver Mercedes.

The collision happened near Clive Road at about 1pm and briefly shut off the road.

Big investment

THAMES Water has announced plans for £5.1bn of investment in improvements to Britain's oldest treatment works, pipes and sewers between 2014 and 2020.

The company has also revealed that its average annual bill will need to increase by £2 above inflation in 2014.

However, it will then decline again between 2015 and 2020, remaining below inflation across that period.

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Academic partnership to tackle health issues

A NEW partnership of Oxford's NHS Trusts and academic institutions will tackle major challenges facing healthcare in this country, it has been announced.

Oxford University, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust, and Oxford Brookes University form the Oxford Academic Health Science Centre (OxAHSC).

The partnership was announced as a designation by the Department of Health last week.

By **Jack Johnson**
jack@taylornewspapers.co.uk

The centre will combine the institutions' individual strengths in world-class basic science, translational research, training and clinical expertise to address 21st-century healthcare challenges.

It is said to allow scientific discoveries to move rapidly from the lab to the ward, operating theatre and general practice, so patients benefit from innovative new treatments.

Professor Andrew Hamilton, vice-chancellor of Oxford University, said: "This new accolade is a wonderful recognition of the excellence of medical sciences research at the University of Oxford and the success of Oxford researchers, and our colleagues in the NHS and at Oxford Brookes, at translating scientific advances into benefits for patients, the community, and healthcare professionals."

OxAHSC's five-year programme will focus on six core themes.

They include delivering the digital medicine revolution, building novel NHS, university and industry relationships, and modulating the immune response for patient benefit.

The list also aims to manage the epidemic of chronic disease, emerging infections and antimicrobial resistance and maintaining cognitive function in health and disease.

Sir John Bell, chairman of the OxAHSC Board, said: "The success of the application reflects the strengths of the four partners in all areas - research, education and healthcare.

"The collaborative approach, commitment and enthusiasm during the development of the themes was key and I am confident that we can now continue to build on this to deliver locally, nationally and internationally."

June Girvin, pro vice-chancellor and dean of Faculty of Health and Life Sciences at Oxford Brookes University, added: "We are absolutely delighted with this outcome.

"The AHSC designation recognises the strength there is in our existing collaboration and the significant potential for the future.

"This is great news for the Oxford health community, and shows how all of us can play our part in global health developments."

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Community garden set for transformation

A TENANTS group in Rose Hill has been working hard with the city council to completely transform a communal garden.

The area in Ashhurst Way was being used for dry washing and had uneven paving, causing hazards to the residents.

However, after meetings with residents a project to make improvements to the areas was approved and funded.

Oxford City Council completely resurfaced the garden with brick paving, and built a brick planter to be used by tenants who enjoy gardening and planting their own vegetables.

Old washing lines have been replaced with retractable lines, new turf was laid, wall baskets installed for additional planting and compost bins and water butts provided.

A bench was also installed and new flowers and bulbs were planted by tenants.

Allison Connell, who was involved with the project and lives in Ashhurst Way, said: "The difference is amazing.

"It makes the appearance of the building look totally different. It makes you feel better."

• *The two bodies were found at a house in Cowley Road, Littlemore*

Investigation is underway after two bodies found in Littlemore

POLICE are currently investigating two unexplained deaths at a house in Littlemore, which were discovered a week apart at an address in Cowley Road.

The body of the first woman was found at the house on November 21, while that of a woman in her 70s was subsequently found last Thursday.

The house had been deemed structurally unsound after the first body was discovered, and work to secure the property was carried out before a full search could be made a week later.

A post-mortem on the first body has been carried out, and was unable to determine a cause of death, although it isn't believed to be suspicious.

Investigating officer Det Insp John Turner said: "There continues to be nothing at this stage to suggest these deaths as suspicious.

"Investigations are now being carried out to determine the circumstances.

"I want to take this opportunity to reassure residents that if they have any concerns at all, please contact their local neighbourhood team."

Anyone with information is asked to contact Det Insp Turner on 101.

News Bites

Digitalisation

SOME of the most unique Bibles and biblical texts that are kept at Oxford University have been digitalised.

The Bodleian Libraries at the university and the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana have made some of them available online as the start of a major digitalisation initiative.

The texts can be found at http://bav.bodleian.ox.ac.uk.

Do you have a story to share with our readers?

Contact **Jack Johnson** on **01235 516932** or jack@taylornewspapers.co.uk

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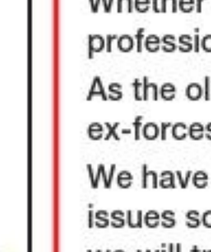

Tony Cowards is a genial gagster whose material covers a wide spectrum, his quick wit has made him sought after as an act and compere by Mirth Control, Christian Knowles Productions and various independent promoters around the UK.

*"Tony Cowards is a great new MC who sets the audience up perfectly, with a nice self deprecating manner"– **Jo Caulfield, Radio 4 and 'Mock the Week'***

Omar Hamdi recently appeared as tour support for **Ava Vidal** on selected dates of her national 2012 – 2013 tour. Omar is known across the country as one of the hardest-working and distinctive rising stars of UK comedy.

*"The Welsh-Egyptian headliner delivered non-stop laughs"– **Surrey Life Magazine***
*"Slick, classy and very clever"– **Worthing Herald***

Open Spots

These are fairly new comedians that are looking for some practice and stage time.

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Management Disclaimer: Please note – that while we make every effort, shows can change without notice due to unforeseen circumstances and commitments of artists

£6m carers allowances 'are going unclaimed'

Trio of charities secure thousands in funding

THREE local charities have benefited from a large amount of funding from a company who raise money for health-related good causes.

HealthStrong Community Interest Company (CIC) has raised £750,341, through The Health Lottery, and Oxford based organisations Full Circle, Scope and the Royal Voluntary Service are among those who have benefited.

Full Circle, based at Donnington Community Centre in Oxford, received £13,000 of the funding.

Rowen Smith, manager at Full Circle, said: "This funding has given us the opportunity to set up inter-generational projects in which the local younger and older generations spend time together."

Chris Lunn, director of HealthStrong CIC, added: "The projects supported using money raised by HealthStrong CIC are extremely valuable to a wide range of individuals, and we look forward to hearing more about how these initiatives are enabling people to live longer and healthier lives."

There is a chance for more local charities to benefit from HealthStrong CIC's funding.

This Saturday there is another lottery draw where once again funds raised will help charities and not-for-profit organisations in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

For more information visit www.HealthStrongCIC.org.uk.

CARERS across Oxfordshire are being urged to take advantage of services and benefits available to them, after it emerged that £6m of allowances are going unclaimed in the county.

The news came as part of Carers Rights Day last Friday, where it was revealed that around £1bn was going unclaimed nationally.

In April 2011 Oxfordshire County Council commissioned Carers Oxfordshire to offer a number of services for carers, including one-to-one support and relevant information.

On Friday they held a conference for carers with guest speakers including Jackie Ashley, the wife of Andrew Marr, who spoke about her experiences of her husband's stroke earlier this year.

It was also staged to raise awareness of carers around the county, and that many of them are eligible for benefits they are not claiming for.

Catherine Blaxhall, manager of Carers Oxfordshire, believes that many people don't claim because they don't realise what they are doing qualifies them as a carer.

She said: "We work extremely hard to raise awareness of carers' issues and to try and help them identify themselves as carers.

By **Adam Flinn**
adam@taylornewspapers.co.uk

"Obviously if you don't know you're a carer you won't know that you're eligible, and I wonder if that is some of the reason why people don't apply.

"Certainly many more carers have identified themselves as carers over the last two years since Carers Oxfordshire was created, and we've had some very positive feedback."

When asked what qualifies a person as a carer, Catherine added: "It's generally providing about 10 hours a week of care for somebody, but for me it's if you're undertaking tasks that wouldn't perhaps be normal in that relationship.

"If you're a married couple and you are helping your spouse with personal care and something you wouldn't normally expect to do, then I think you need to start thinking of yourself as a carer."

More information and advice, as well as information on claiming the Carer's Allowance, can be found at www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk.

Illegal staff to be deported

FOUR illegal workers from Albania were arrested in Oxford last Wednesday, following an operation by immigration enforcement officers at the Premier Car Wash in Watlington Road.

The men, aged 19, 20, 25 and 31, were found to have entered the country illegally, and were transferred to immigration detention pending removal from the UK.

Premier Car Wash now faces a penalty of up to £40,000, unless it can provide proof that the correct right-to-work checks were carried out.

Paul Smith, from the Thames Valley and Surrey immigration enforcement team, said: "Businesses in Oxfordshire that follow the rules have nothing to fear.

"But those who either deliberately employ people with no right to work or fail to carry out the legally required checks on their staff should expect to face heavy financial penalties.

Illegal working has a negative impact on communities.

It defrauds the taxpayer, undercuts honest employers and cheats legitimate job seekers out of employment opportunities.

"I would urge members of the public with information about suspected immigration abuse to get in touch."

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News Bites

Last of the Hatch

THE last of the outgoing MINI Hatch series drove off the production line in Cowley last week.

Over a million Hatch models have been built at Plant Oxford since 2006 but production of the new car is now underway.

The new MINI Hatch is set to be launched in Spring next year.

Free licence

PEOPLE who are celebrating their 75th birthday in the next 12 months will be entitled to a free TV licence once they reach the landmark age.

Anyone aged 75 or over is eligible for a free TV licence for their main address, meaning family or carers living in the same home will also benefit.

To apply visit www.tvlicensing.co.uk/over75.

China relations

MEMBERS of the Oxford Fertility Unit left for China on Monday as part of a delegation including the Prime Minister.

The trip, led by David Cameron MP, seeks to forge relationships and improve economic links with China.

Oxford Fertility Unit and the University of Oxford were invited to share their experiences of successful partnerships with Chinese businesses since 2010.

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Crackdown as cops ask: 'Is it worth the risk?'

By Adam Flinn

adam@taylornewspapers.co.uk

THAMES Valley Police launched their Christmas anti-drink and drug drive 'Is It Worth The Risk?' campaign on Sunday, in partnership with Hampshire Constabulary.

The forces' Joint Roads Policing Unit will be conducting a number of cross-border operations, with the aim of reducing the number of alcohol and drug-related incidents on the region's roads around the festive period.

Last year over 2,500 drivers were breathalysed in Oxfordshire from December 1 to January 1, as part of the national campaign by the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Department for Transport.

This led to 74 people being arrested following positive breath tests.

Chief inspector Henry Parsons of the Joint Roads Policing Unit said: "We are asking the public to be safe rather than sorry.

"Collisions involving alcohol or drugs not only devastate the lives of victims and their families, they also ruin the lives of offenders, who could face a lengthy driving ban or imprisonment.

"As well as having to live with the lifelong guilt of having killed or injured someone through their reckless behaviour, offenders could also lose their job, home and their livelihood.

"If you are going out and know you will be drinking, organise alternative transport or a designated driver to ensure everyone is able to enjoy the festive period safely."

Across the Thames Valley, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, 61 people were seriously injured and seven were killed in 2012 in collisions where alcohol was a factor.

In the first eight months of 2013, a further 32 people have been seriously injured, and six killed.

Road safety checks will be carried out at all times during the day and night across the region, and officers will record information about those stopped relating to what age bracket they fall into.

This data will be given to the Department for Transport, who will analyse it and understand the levels of drink-driving nationally and the correlation between age and behaviour.

Sailing thousands of miles for Oxford charity

• Richard Mayon-White with his two children in Antigua

A VOYAGER who is raising money for an Oxford-based charity has completed his 4,000-mile expedition across the Atlantic.

Richard Mayon-White is hoping to raise £40,000 to be split between Sobell House Hospice in Oxford and national charity Sail 4 Cancer.

He sailed from Gibraltar to Antigua and is so far more than half-way towards achieving the desired sum of money.

Mr Mayon-White arrived on his Haskapa yacht in Antigua on Tuesday morning and was greeted by his family.

He wrote in his final blog: "Soon this little Haskapa-shaped bubble that I've been living in pretty much since leaving the UK nearly two months ago will nudge up against normal, everyday reality.

"This project, driven by the desire to do something positive, has been a year in the planning, and encompasses a concept dreamt up mid-ocean eight years ago, and a lifelong ambition.

"Those are big rocks to carry, and it will be with some relief that I'm able to put that burden aside."

To donate, visit www.tropic4cancer.com and click on 'donate'.

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Bangladeshi & Indian Cuisine & Takeaway
Christmas Day Menu

Popadoms and Chutneys

Starters
Homemade Potato and Leek Soup
Served with rustic bread and butter
Prawn Cocktail
Served with bread and butter
Aloo Bahar
Potato filled with chiken tikka topped with cheese
Nurjahani Kebab
Minced Lamb meat and Chicken grilled with cheddar cheese

Main
Traditional Roast Turkey
Served with Roast potatoes, fresh seasonal vegetables and gravy
Traditional Roast Beef
Served with Roast potatoes, fresh seasonal vegetables and gravy
Kursi Lamb
Medium spiced minced lamb served with rice and baby potatoes
Fried Salmon Curry
Medium spiced homemade curry served with rice and baby potatoes
Tandoori Roasted Vegetable
Roasted vegetables cooked with fried garlic in a rich medium sauce

Desserts
Christmas Pudding
Served with Brandy Sauce
Orange Sorbet
Triple Chocolate Cheesecake
Triple Chocolate Cheesecake
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News Bites

More than honey

OXFORD Friends of the Earth supported the screening of a new documentary last week that focuses on the prospect of bees becoming extinct.

'More Than Honey' takes an in-depth look at why we need to rely on bees, and was screened for the first time at The Phoenix Picturehouse last Thursday.

Andrew Smith, MP for Oxford East, attended the screening.

Awareness day for osteoarthritis

AN OSTEOARTHRITIS patient awareness day is being held at the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre today. It is a chance for people to find out what the Arthritis Research UK Centre for Osteoarthritis Pathogenesis is doing about finding new therapies.

It will be held in the main atrium of the Nuffield Othopaedic Centre from 10am to 2pm.

Teenagers set to get sporty

A FREE event for young people aged 14 to 21-years-old is taking place tomorrow to help launch a new Youth Ambition Sports Programme.

The programme is jointly funded by Oxford City Council and Sport England's Community Sport Activation fund.

Taking place between 4.30pm and 7pm at the Royal Mail Centre, Hollow Way, young people will have the opportunity to try out a variety of different sports.

City's rail station gets 'important' upgrade

IMPROVEMENTS will be made in and around Oxford Station over the Christmas period.

By **Jack Johnson**
jack@taylornewspapers.co.uk

Network Rail will lay new track in Oxford to improve the resilience of services from the station.

As a result, bosses promise train services will operate with minimal disruption.

However, some routes may be affected by the work.

Oxford Station manager Dave Martin said: "This upgrade is vitally important to improve our customers' travel experiences for the future and will help to ease congestion on the way through Oxford.

"To minimise inconvenience as much as possible, the work is being done at the least busy time of the year.

"However, please plan your journey as there is the potential that these services will take you a little longer."

Network Rail have also revealed the timetables for services to Oxford over the festive period, between Christmas and the New Year.

Between December 27 and January 1, there will be two trains per hour between Oxford and Didcot Parkway.

One train per hour will continue to Reading.

There will be an hourly service to Radley while services to Culham and Appleford will be reduced.

Meanwhile, fast trains between Oxford and London Paddington will run every 30 minutes, calling at Reading, Maidenhead and Slough between December 27 and January 1, on every day except Sunday.

On December 29 there will be one train an hour calling at Reading, Maidenhead and Slough.

Finally, Direct trains from Oxford to Worcester Shrub Hill/Foregate Street will run every 90 minutes on December 27 and December 28.

On December 29 services through to Worcester will run every two hours with some limited services through to Hereford.

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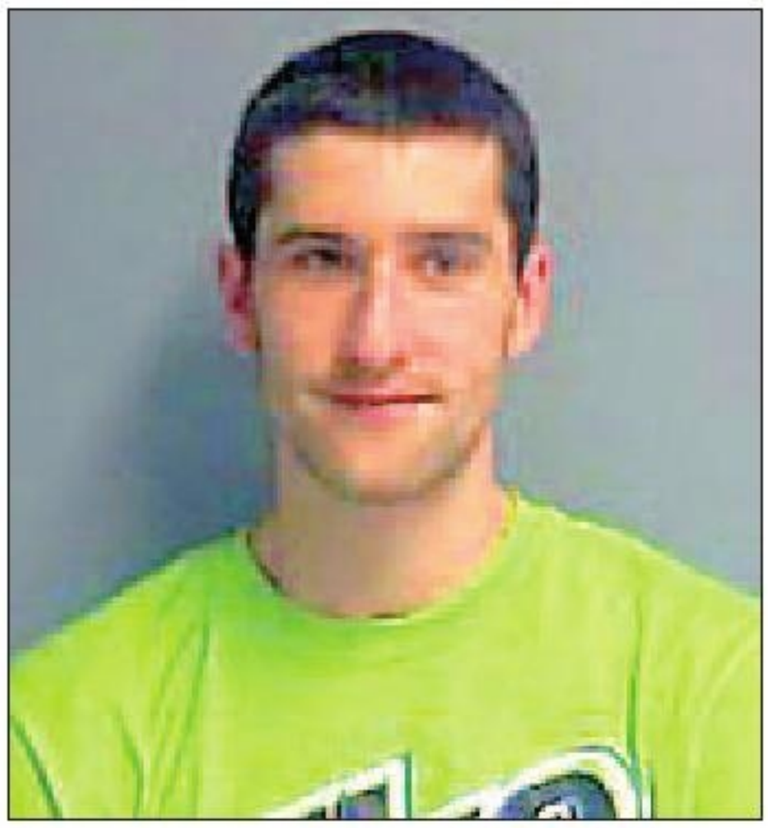
Tuna-eating burglar jailed after student theft

A 27-YEAR-OLD man from Headington has been sentenced to 18 months imprisonment after stealing from four students.

Arron Carroll, of Stainfield Road, was convicted and sentenced at Oxford Crown Court last week after pleading guilty to burgling a house where four female students were living.

Between 1pm and 7.45pm on June 7, Carroll broke into a house in York Place, Oxford, through the back door.



He searched all the rooms and used a washing basket to carry stolen items from the top floor.

Carroll then took time to eat a tuna pasta dish he had bought, which he left on the front window sill, leaving via the front door.

He stole laptops, hard drives, an iPod, cameras, bankcards and other electrical items.

Carroll was identified using DNA left behind on the fork and a fingerprint left on a bag some of the stolen items were taken from.

Investigating officer PC Sarah Turpin said: "This burglary affected the four female occupants, who have now moved out of the property.

"Being students, it was extremely hard for them to replace the items that were stolen and the laptops taken contained essays and university work that time and effort had been spent on.

"This result will mean a lot to them."

• Arron Carroll has been sent to prison for 18 months

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'Meeting in the middle'

By **Adam Flinn**
adam@taylornewspapers.co.uk

FOLK and punk band The Bad Shepherds, formed by comedy actor Ade Edmondson in 2008, bring their new show to Oxford's O2 Academy next Thursday.

It comes following the release of the group's third album 'Mud, Blood and Beer', which came out in August to critical acclaim featuring the group's unique sound of playing punk songs on folk instruments.

This was the first album to feature original Bad Shepherds material, written by band members Ade, Tony Donockley and Andy Dinan.

"The album's much more accomplished, it's much better," said Ade. "We've been doing this for five years now, and you learn a thing or two, we've got much more radical in the way we do things.

"The general kind of arrangement will be me and Tony going to the pub, and just having a nice day. We don't get drunk, just have a lovely session, come back and think about songs we used to love."

Ade is best known for his comedic acting career, and his roles in television series The Young Ones and Bottom with collaborative partner Rik Mayall.

But in recent years he has moved away from acting to concentrate of music, something he is enjoying a lot more.

"The two best gigs I've ever had in my life were with The Bad Shepherds, without a doubt," Ade said. "I think music is much more fun as a performer.

"Comedy is very combative – you go in and take an audience on and wrestle them to the ground.

"With music you go in and agree to meet in the middle, you all want to be in the same frame of mind, it's a lot better.

"Comedy's kind of rapid and instant, it's like having a McDonald's instead of a proper meal. It happens very quickly and then it's gone."

• *The Bad Shepherds*

I'm an Aristocrat

A COMEDY adventure set in 18th century France comes to Oxford's Pegasus Theatre from tomorrow - 'I'm An Aristocrat Get Me Out Of Here'.

Theatrical innovators Gonzo Moose re-invent the story of the Scarlet Pimpernel, set during the French Revolution.

The story follows an underground movement who are rescuing people that have been condemned to the guillotine - in particular the aristocrats.

It is performed by a cast of three, who take on multiple roles during the production.

"It's going really well," said Gonzo Moose's artistic director Mark Dawson. "I think anyone with a silly, daft sense of humour will like it. It is a swashbuckling comedy adventure set during revolutionary France, and it's a Scarlet Pimpernel spoof.

"The plot involves the head of the secret police, and it's his quest to bring down the underground movement and catch their leader."

Tickets cost £14.

Listening Room

THE Old Fire Station is host to its third Listening Room gig on Sunday, with music from three bands throughout the evening.

London rock and roll trio Miraculous Mule, instrumental post-krautrock group Listing Ships and three percussionists in Duchess take to the stage, with a range of songs to entertain the crowds.

Tickets for the show cost £8, and doors open at 7pm. For more details, call 01865 263980.

It's a Miracle!

CLASSIC Christmas film 'Miracle on 34th Street' comes to the New Theatre from Monday, in a new stage production of one of the most popular festive films of all time.

A white-bearded gentleman claiming to be the real Father Christmas brings the start of a genuine miracle on New York City's 34th Street, in an all-singing and all-dancing adaptation of the movie.

Four performances are scheduled from Monday to Wednesday, and tickets start from £21.40. Go to www.newtheatreoxford.org.uk or call 0844 871 3020 for more details.

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Saturday 21st December 9am-3pm
Sunday 22nd December 9am-3pm
Tuesday 24th December 8am- 2pm
Closed Christmas Day
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7 December, 7:30pm
Drayton Village Hall
COUNTRY MUSIC NIGHT
(& Christmas Buffet, Mulled Wine, etc) with two live acts, Tony Collins and Clear Cut.
01865 341778 www.draytonvh.co.uk

7 December - 8 December, 10:30am - 3:30pm
Denman, Marcham
CHRISTMAS FAIR AND REAL JAM FESTIVAL
A fun family event with a festive market, Santa's grotto, mulled wine and mince pies.
w: www.wirealjamfestival.com t: 01865 391 991

7 December
Shush the Venue, Newbury Street, Wantage
THE COMEDY CLUB OXFORDSHIRE
"Tickets: £10 in advance| £12 on the door | Add a Curry for £6.50 | Over 18's only | Disco 'til 3amTime: Doors Open 8.00pm | Show Time 8.30pm"
01235 771122/55 www.thecomedy-club.co.uk

7 December
St John the Evangelist, Oxford
THE SIXTEEN
This festive programme, A Ceremony of Carols, features the music of two of the most significant composers of vocal music of the 20th century, Francis Poulenc and Benjamin Britten. It includes some of Britten's finest choral music for Christmas including A Ceremony of Carols.
www.thesixteen.com

7 December, 10am - 12pm
Cutteslowe Park, Oxford, OX2 8NW
TRY ORIENTEERING AT CUTTESLOWE PARK!
"This is an exciting introduction to orienteering, organised by Thames Valley Orienteering Club, and is aimed at newcomers, families and runners of all ages and abilities. There will be longer courses for runners as well as shorter courses for families and children. You can run, jog or walk at your own pace. If you haven't tried orienteering before, we'll help you get started. Just don't forget your sense of adventure! Come along any time between 10am and 11.30am and give it a go. For more info visit our website at www.tvoc.org.uk, see our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/tvoclub or email us: publicity@tvoc.org.uk"
www.tvoc.org.uk/saturdayseries

8 December, 3pm
Henley Town Hall
ALLEN DIGITAL THEATRE ORGAN - ELIZABETH HARRISON
£7 concessions £6.50
www.henleyorgantrust.org.uk

10 December, 6:30pm
Waterperry Gardens, Nr Wheatley
JAMES WONG FREE TALK GROW YOUR OWN WAY
The talk includes a questions and answers section giving visitors the chance to quiz James! Tickets only so pre-booking is essential .
www.waterperrygardens.co.uk

10 December, 7:30pm
St Mary's Church Wallingford
ALBION CHRISTMAS BAND
Tickets, £16 and £10 for those under 17 and/or in full-time education, are available from the box office on 01491 826972, Wallingford Town Information Centre or via the websites: www.tp-ents.org.uk and www.wegottickets.com/event/241164

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WIN the Snowman and the Snowdog on DVD

THIS Christmas, you finally have the chance to relive the enchanting animated story of The Snowman and The Snowdog, available on DVD and Blu-ray™ for the first time from Universal Pictures (UK). Brought to you by the team behind the classic children's picture book and animated film The Snowman, the DVD is also available on boxset and includes the wonderful Oscar®-nominated original. What better time of year to share the tender tale that reunites fans to The Snowman and introduces a new best friend, The Snowdog?

Closing date:
Friday, December 13

The Snowman and The Snowdog beautifully captures the magic and excitement of the original film as well as being a heart-warming story about love, loss and friendship. When a young boy, Billy, moves house, he discovers a secret box hidden under the floorboards – a snowman-making kit! Billy builds his snowman and, with a little spare snow, a Snowdog. At midnight, The Snowman and The Snowdog magically come to life. Join Billy on the most amazing adventure, as they fly over London to the North Pole and compete with an assortment of colourful characters in a very special race. On return, Billy must leave his new friends outside and return to bed – but first, a wonderful surprise awaits him…

Featuring a brand new soundtrack from former Razorlight drummer Andy Burrows, the official single 'Light the Night' is played during the flying sequence to dramatic effect, whilst the film's traditional hand drawn technique helps it remain true to the original.

With a runtime of 23 minutes, a bonus features and a price of £10.99 (DVD) and £15.99 (Blu-ray) this is a perfect stocking filler. The DVD boxset that also contains the The Snowman is available for £14.99

We have 3 copies of this DVD to give away so if you want to be in with a chance of winning a copy then just answer this simple question:

Q: WHO WAS THE LEGENDARY ARTIST WHO ORIGINALLY CREATED THE SNOWMAN?

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Sudoku

Place a number from 1 to 9 in each empty cell so that each 3x3 block, column, and full row includes each of the numbers from 1 to 9 only once. **EASY/MEDIUM/HARD**

	9			7	4	5		2
3	2				6			
		4			5	6	3	
		7	9				1	8
6			5		3			9
8	3				1	2		
	5	1	4			8		
			1				9	7
4		8	6	2			5	

	2	7				1	6	
				6				
	3	5		7	1			9
			6			3		2
2								6
9		6			3			
8			4	5		2	9	
				1				
	6	4				5	1	

5			6			1		
	9	1	4				8	
	4					7		3
					2	9		
1								2
		6	5					
3		8					7	
	7				5	6	9	
		5			7			4

Two speed crossword

Quick Clues Across

4 Given piquancy (6)
8 Uses (7)
10 Idea (7)
11 Precipitous (5)
12 Go in (5)
13 Aliens (9)
16 Going without (9)
19 Confidence (5)
20 Very unpleasant (5)
22 Explanations (7)
23 Most sacred (7)
24 Stylish (6)

Quick Clues Down

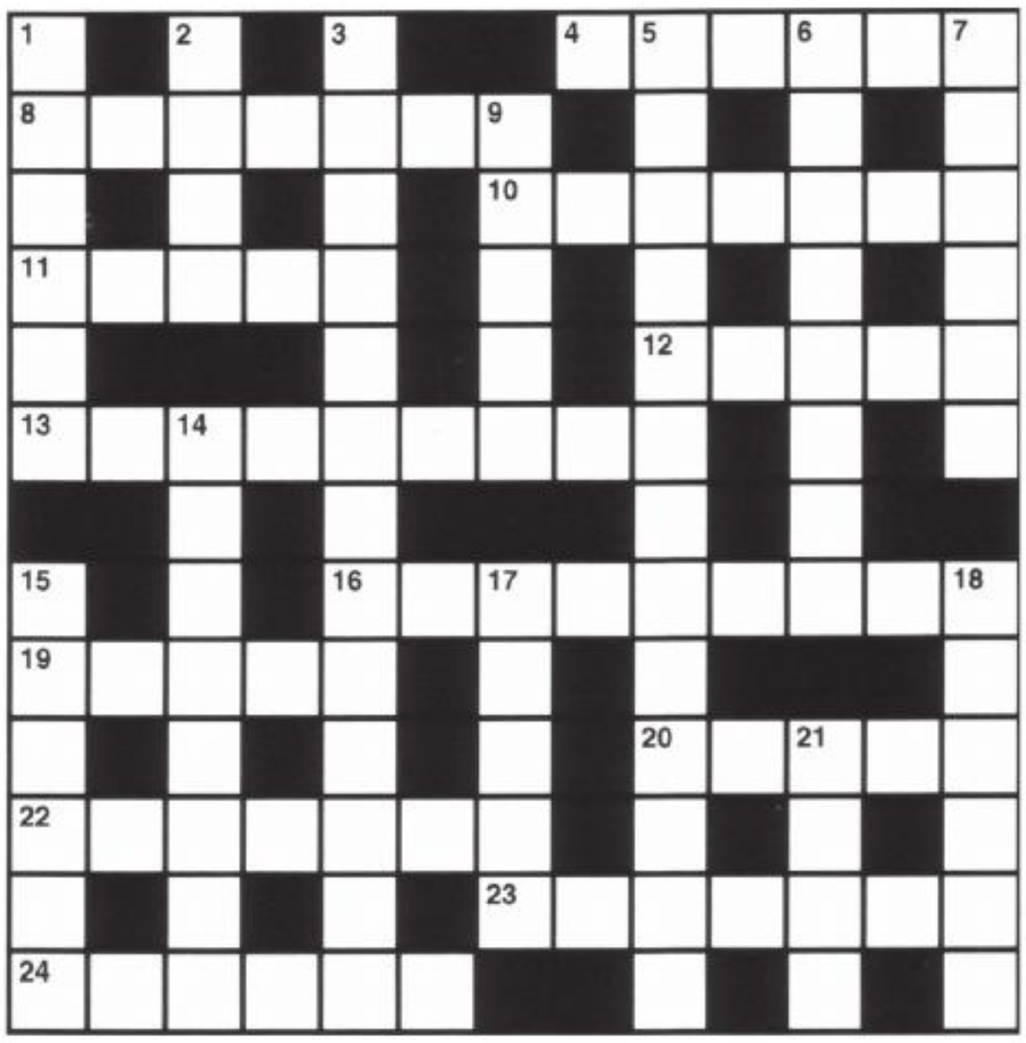
1 Animals (6)
2 Part of church (4)
3 Recompenses (13)
5 Hymns sung as clergy enter church (13)
6 Ponder (8)
7 Discourages (6)
9 Fashion (5)
14 Adjust (8)
15 Gazed (6)
17 Break (5)
18 Appointments (6)
21 Pip (4)

Cryptic Clues Across

4 Pour out nothing revolutionary, and sounded pleased (6)
8 Sign the document to gain attention (7)
10 The king's daughter curtailed her brothers (7)
11 He set out for the ones near at hand (5)
12 In one way ties down without possessing regular movements (5)
13 Re-cancel a cheque's acceptance (9)
16 On strike, we sigh about what is of greater importance (9)
19 The department has nothing for the storehouse (5)
20 Thanks to the range of knowledge obtained (5)
22 Swindles about light chalks (7)
23 Beat the man for touching (7)
24 Seen at different material (6)

Cryptic Clues Down

1 Feeling rotten on September 1st with a head cold (6)
2 Go back to the French for an amorous lock (4)
3 Better boon too for the famous question (2,2,2,3,2,2)
5 Somehow resent uniting around for a dull result (13)
6 Falling back to surrendering again (8)
7 Want of practice is found in the great actress (6)
9 Watering place in a European country (5)
14 He never forgets a trunk call (8)
15 Prepares about a hundred decrees (6)
17 Have confidence in the people administering the property (5)
18 Stay in some sort of mental balance (6)
21 Keen to be a member (4)



Scribble space

Last week's solutions

5	2	3	9	1	6	8	7	4
8	9	7	5	4	3	1	2	6
6	4	1	7	8	2	9	3	5
1	6	9	4	3	8	2	5	7
7	5	8	2	6	9	4	1	3
2	3	4	1	7	5	6	9	8
3	7	2	8	9	4	5	6	1
4	1	5	6	2	7	3	8	9
9	8	6	3	5	1	7	4	2

9	8	4	5	7	2	6	1	3
1	3	7	9	6	4	2	5	8
2	6	5	1	3	8	4	7	9
7	5	8	4	9	3	1	2	6
6	1	2	8	5	7	9	3	4
3	4	9	2	1	6	7	8	5
8	7	6	3	2	9	5	4	1
5	9	3	7	4	1	8	6	2
4	2	1	6	8	5	3	9	7

9	4	5	8	3	2	6	7	1
7	1	6	5	4	9	8	2	3
8	3	2	7	1	6	9	5	4
6	8	4	1	2	7	5	3	9
3	5	7	9	6	8	1	4	2
1	2	9	4	5	3	7	8	6
2	7	8	6	9	4	3	1	5
5	9	3	2	7	1	4	6	8
4	6	1	3	8	5	2	9	7

Quick Crossword

Across: 4 Russet 8 Eternal 10 Andiron 11 Ounce 12 Rinse 13 Ferocious 16 Impeached 19 Thumb 20 Dream 22 Ennoble 23 Landing 24 Sudden
Down: 1 Set off 2 Bean 3 Indescribable 5 Understanding 6 Strength 7 Tensed 9 Largo 14 Returned 15 Athens 17 Panel 18 Damage 21 Epic

Cryptic Crossword

Across: 4 Tricks 8 Weak tea 10 Lateral 11 Digit 12 Igloo 13 Sartorial 16 March past 19 Arena 20 Motor 22 Blasted 23 Suspend 24 Layers
Down: 1 Swedes 2 Gang 3 Stationmaster 5 Retail chemist 6 Carolina 7 Saloon 9 Alibi 14 Rosemary 15 Gambol 17 Reeds 18 Tirade 21 Tied

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REVIEW: VAUXHALLL ASTRA VXR

By **Philip Shoulder**

@writeonmotoring

INTRODUCING the most powerful hatchback in its class - the 276bhp Vauxhall Astra VXR.

It might not look as mean as its pumped-up predecessor, but that changes with the optional £1,000 'Aero Pack', which adds a biplane rear spoiler, more muscular side skirts and 20-inch alloy wheels.

Upon ignition, you're greeted by a bassy soundtrack from the stainless steel twin exhausts. The sporty theme continues through to the steering which is weighty even at lower speeds.

Although always flexible, the 2.0 litre turbocharged motor delivers its gut-punch between 2500 and 5000 rpm. If you stomp on the throttle and hang on to each gear, you'll hit 62 mph in 5.9 seconds and a 155 mph top speed. Yet despite the performance gains, the VXR now manages a claimed combined 34.9 mpg and emits 189g/km of CO2.

This new VXR is vastly better to drive than the old model, thanks to a new sophisticated HiPerStrut (High Performance Strut) suspension set-up, designed to improve the car's manners and make it easier to drive quickly. Of course, 276 bhp is a lot of power to feed through the front wheels, so hard acceleration on a wet road causes the wheels to scrabble a bit as the car searches for grip, and the VXR still has a slight tendency to wiggle the steering wheel under full straight-line acceleration. However, compared to the old car it's very mild and doesn't hamper control or stability. The steering is accurate and responsive, giving the driver confidence to explore the car's high grip levels and mesmerizing cornering ability – aided by the mechanical limited slip differential.

The VXR's cabin is very similar to that of a regular Astra, but unique design features include VXR panel graphics, sports pedals and other trim emblazoned with the VXR logo, such as the gear knob, square-bottomed steering wheel and big leather bucket seats, which provide good comfort and support.

Coupe curves somehow fail to impinge on space, with plenty of leg and headroom available. Luggage and storage areas are also generous, with a 380 litre 'seats-up' boot capacity exceeding both Volkswagen Scirocco and Renault Meganne coupe, by 68 and 36 litres respectively.

VERDICT

Vauxhall has pulled out all the stops with its most powerful Astra, and it shows. True to the breed the new VXR is loud and proud; but without the unruliness and harshness of its predecessor. It manages to blend exhilarating performance and sublime handling with practicality, refinement and everyday usability.

• *Vauxhall Astra VXR*

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POMPEY APPROACH U'S OVER WILDER

Portsmouth ask to talk to Oxford boss after sacking Whittingham

OXFORD United boss Chris Wilder has been given permission by the club to speak to Portsmouth about their vacant manager's position.

By **Jack Johnson**
jack@taylornewspapers.co.uk

Pompey have been without a manger since they sacked Guy Whittingham on November 25.

Wilder, who has guided United to the top of League Two this season, was approached by Pompey, who are 17th in the table, last Saturday.

As the Journal went to press, there was still no news about the outcome of the talks.

United chairman Ian Lenagan has since spoken about his decision to allow Wilder to speak to the south-coast club, insisting that he would like him to stay.

He said: "We have allowed Chris Wilder to speak to Portsmouth, partly out of respect for his long service at Oxford United and partly because we want our manager to be at Oxford United because he has the desire to be here, not because we prevent him speaking to other clubs.

"Chris and I have been entirely straightforward with each other and from the board's point of view we have made it abundantly clear that we want him to continue doing the good job he has been doing at Oxford United."

Former Crawley Town boss Richie Barker is also linked with the Pompey role.

Portsmouth's approach became public on the day of United's 1-1 draw at Fleetwood Town and Lenagan was disappointed with Pompey's timing.

"There are ways of doing these things properly, and we feel that the timing of the approach by Portsmouth, and the leaking of that approach on a matchday - whoever was responsible for that - was not doing things properly," he said.

"It is a tribute to Chris's professionalism that he remained 100 per cent focused on the job at hand, but I will be writing to Portsmouth's board about what happened."

Despite the speculation surrounding Wilder's future, United are in action this evening as they face Conference side Gateshead in an FA Cup first round replay.

Late goals from Deane Smalley and Danny Rose saw United come back from 2-0 down against the Heed just under a month ago.

If United beat Gateshead this evening they will face another Conference side in Wrexham in the second round on Monday night.

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• *Chris Wilder has been given permission to talk to Portsmouth (Picture by Steve Daniels)*

Exiles suffer first defeat of the campaign

LONDON Welsh slipped to their first defeat of the season last weekend as they were beaten 28-26 by Bedford Blues.

The Exiles had won nine games in a row in the Greene King IPA Championship but Bedford brought their impressive run to an end.

However, Welsh remain top of the table and have an eight-point gap over second-placed Rotherham Titans.

Head coach Justin Burnell who said Welsh "let themselves down" at Bedford will be looking for a reaction this weekend.

The Exiles welcome Edinburgh Accies to Old Deer Park in the B&I Cup this weekend and travel up to Scotland a week later.

Burnell's men are back in league action at the Kassam Stadium on December 21 when they face London Scottish.

City secure first victory in three games as Motors stall

ANDY Ballard, Mike Symons and Kayden Jackson fired Oxford City to a convincing win over Vauxhall Motors last weekend.

The 3-0 win was their first victory in three games and saw them open up a five-point gap over basement side Gloucester City in the Skrill North.

Ballard, Symons and Jackson all struck in the second half as City dominated their opponents at Court Place Farm.

Mike Ford's men now turn their attention to this weekend's six-pointer at Worcester City.

The Dragons are just a place below City in 19th with two points separating the two sides.

However, a win for Ford's men could see them move considerably up the league table.

Oxford City	**3**
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